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Military astronauts a new breed: Jane's

LONDON [AP]—The United States is developing a new breed of military astronauts because generals fear that superpower skirmishing in space is "almost inevitable" in the next 25 years, said the new Jane's Spaceflight Directory published Tuesday.

Although the U.S. is ahead in space technology, "the Russians have been far more energetic and successful in applying the technology that they possess," editor Reginald Turnill said in an introduction to the 311-page directory.

The directory is produced by Jane's Publishing Co., which issues military yearbooks that are considered highly authoritative by the defense establishment.

Turnill said the formation of space commands by the U.S. Air Force and Navy reflected growing concern about increased military activity in space. "The belief among U.S. defense chiefs that in the next 25 years contests in space

are not only possible but almost inevitable, have led to the setting up of the new USAF Space Command," he said.

IN A RADIO INTERVIEW Tuesday, he said that means fierce superpower competition and technological skirmishing, rather than outright space battles, as the U.S. and the Soviet Union jockey for the "high ground" above the Earth.

"The feeling is that contests, rather than war, are likely. And this sort of thing has already begun, of course, with the superpowers pushing and shoving one another up there in space," Turnill said. "There's some indication that possibly the Russians have interfered with one or two U.S. satellites used for reconnaissance or spying purposes."

He wrote in the directory that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's "tradition of an open-space program is being steadily

eroded by the addition of secret control rooms at the Kennedy and Johnson Space Centers, and by pressure for a separate military fleet of space shuttles."

The long-term aim is to form the "new breed of military astronauts" among NASA's 77 space travelers into "a separate team who will nurse their secrets," flying shuttle craft "to and from the inevitable manned military reconnaissance platforms," Turnill said.

BUT HE SAID THE Soviets appear to be winning the second space race—to build a manned station above the Earth. "The battle for space-based laser weapons is settling down to be grimmer and much more expensive than the race to the moon 20 years ago," he said.

Citing U.S. intelligence sources, he said the Soviets could be able to place high-energy laser weapons in orbit by 1986. The U.S. does not expect to do that until 1989.